



# William Ellis School

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

**Last Review date:** January 2022  
**Approved:** Full Governing Body  
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**Review date:** January 2025

## William Ellis School

### ATTENDANCE POLICY

At William Ellis School we want to ensure that all pupils receive a full-time education to maximise opportunities, attainment, well-being and wider life changes for everyone to realise their potential. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the school community to strive for excellence and enjoyment in education. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and punctually.

#### VISION

Regular and punctual attendance is essential for effective learning and children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

At William Ellis School we aim to implement national best practice in attendance to ensure that:

- **Good attendance is rewarded** to ensure attendance has a high profile within the school.
- Early **intervention provides rapid support** so there is a culture where parents and students can ask for help, staff know how to support students and parents, including through external agencies.

The most up-to-date and effective **research-based strategies** are implemented

Students, parents and staff **know and understand the attendance policy** and what their role is in support good attendance.

#### ATTENDANCE TARGET

William Ellis School intends to maintain its high levels of attendance each year. Our current target for attendance is 92% for every student.

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

Minimum attendance targets will be communicated by Heads of Year, Form Tutors and are available on the school website.

Throughout the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements can be made.

We will keep you regularly updated regarding your son's progress via text, phone, email, letter and in-school meetings where necessary.

#### ABSENCE PROCEDURES

**If your child is absent, you must:**

- Contact the attendance officer on **020 7267 9346 and dial extension 1 when prompted** to leave a message on the absence line. This absence line is monitored throughout the day. Alternatively, you can email [attendance@williamellis.camden.sch.uk](mailto:attendance@williamellis.camden.sch.uk).
- You will be asked to provide your son's full name and Form group and the reason for absence as

soon as possible on the first day of absence.

- You must call or email **every day** thereafter to advise school of your son's progress.
- Send a **written note** in **on the first day they return** with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us.

If you have any further questions or information you would like to provide the school, please email our attendance address on [attendance@williamellis.camden.sch.uk](mailto:attendance@williamellis.camden.sch.uk).

#### **If your child is absent, we will:**

- Telephone, text or email you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- If absences persist, invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or Pastoral Leaders and Assistant Headteacher.
- Consult with the Local Authority Pupil Attendance Service if attendance falls below 95%

#### **Leaving school site during the school day**

In order for us to process a request for an authorised absence during the school day (e.g., for an unavoidable medical appointment – see authorised absence on page 9 for more information) please provide evidence via email or in writing to the attendance officer. This can be done via the email address [attendance@williamellis.camden.sch.uk](mailto:attendance@williamellis.camden.sch.uk) or in person at student services or the school office.

In the event that your son has **prior permission** to leave the school site during the school day, they should go to **student services** where they will receive a permission slip from the Attendance Officer to leave. This slip can be presented to any adult who questions a students' absence from school when the student is not on the school site.

#### **The School Office will not allow students off-site unless they have a permission slip from the Attendance Officer.**

In the event that your child feels unwell during the school day **only the Head of Year or another senior member of staff** can grant permission for a student to either be collected from school or where there is an adult at home. This is done only as a last resort and in the event a student is so unwell they cannot attend lessons.

DFE in Working together to Improve school Attendance 2024 states:

*"Leave of absence should not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours".*

#### **LATENESS**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day, they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information / instructions and news for the day. Late arriving pupils can also disrupt lessons and this can be embarrassing for the child. This can encourage absence.

#### **How we manage lateness**

The school day starts when the bell goes at **8:30am** and we expect your child to be in class, sat down and ready to learn by **8:35am** when the second bell goes. They should be in the playground by **8:25am** ready for when the main school building opens.

Registers are marked as soon as the bell goes at **8:35am**.

At **9:00am** the registers will be closed. If your child arrives after that time, he will receive an unauthorised absence mark that shows them to be on site but **not** counted as present for statistical / legal purposes.

### **Punctuality to lessons**

Students have a maximum of **5 minutes** between lessons and at the end of break/lunch to transition to their next class. Any student arriving after 5 minutes will have number of minutes late recorded by the teacher and detentions will be issued for students arriving without a valid reason.

If your child has a persistent late record, he will receive detentions, then be put on report and you may be asked to meet with the Attendance Officer, Head of Year or Assistant Headteacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

### **How we manage attendance to lessons in school**

Teachers will mark the register promptly at the beginning of every lesson. If teachers have suspicions or concerns about a students' whereabouts, they should contact the on-call teacher to locate the student. Any missing registers are followed up by the Attendance Officer throughout the day.

All students out of lessons during lesson time must have a slip from their class teacher explaining the reason for absence and the time they left the class. Any student out of lessons without a valid reason or permission slip may receive a consequence.

On rare occasions where the school information management system is not operating, paper registers (which are printed and stored each week in the AO's office for emergency use) can be used.

### **TERM DATES**

School term dates are published in advance and can be found on the school website.

Whilst every effort is made for common term dates across Camden, sometimes term dates may differ if you have children attending more than one school. Please check the term dates on each school website and do not assume each school will have the same term dates.

They are also available from the school office and will be regularly highlighted in the school newsletter.

Staff training days (Inset days) are included in the term dates schedule. Parents or carers will receive written notice of any changes in term dates. Those changes will also be published in the school newsletter.

## **WHY REGULAR ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY IS IMPORTANT**

### **1. Learning**

We know from experience and from a range of academic studies that regular absence and poor punctuality can have a detrimental effect on a child's learning. When a pupil is absent or arrives late, this disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning not only of that pupil but also that of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility. Permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in a penalty notice or prosecution.

### **2. Safeguarding**

At William Ellis School, we believe every pupil should be able learn in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. We respect and value all children and are committed to providing a caring, friendly, and safe environment for all our pupils so they can learn and participate in all school activities in a relaxed and secure atmosphere.

Attending school regularly promotes the welfare and safety of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents/carers. Safeguarding is about offering early help and support to children and families. Difficulties with attendance and lateness may be signs that something is worrying the child, or that there are difficulties within the family. Poor or irregular attendance, persistent lateness, or children missing from education may be considered a safeguarding matter, if this places your child at risk of harm.

Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility. Within the context of this school, safeguarding and promoting the welfare and life opportunities for children encompasses:

- Attendance, behaviour management, health and safety, access to the curriculum and anti-bullying, protecting children from abuse and neglect, online safety, radicalisation and extremism, awareness of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).
- More information on safeguarding and the protection of children can be found in the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

To allow us to safeguard the children in our care it is important that parents and carers provide the school with their current contact details and provide at least two other contact numbers in case of emergency.

It is also important for parents to let the school know of any specific vulnerability in relation to their child or home circumstances. If you are uncertain about what would be considered a vulnerability, please speak with your son's Head of Year.

## **PROMOTING REGULAR ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils, and all members of school staff.

**To help us all to focus on this we will:**

- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates, and outings/events.
- Run promotional events when parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.
- Contact parents when we have a concern about their child's attendance or punctuality.

### **Explaining the importance of good attendance and punctuality to pupils**

Students receive guidance from teachers on an individual, class and school level about the importance of good attendance and punctuality. If a student has concerns about their attendance or punctuality, they are encouraged to speak to their Form Tutor.

### **Getting to School**

Students are encouraged to walk and cycle to school where possible in order to get to school on time before the bell goes.

### **Arriving on Time**

Students are encouraged to go to bed at an appropriate time so that they are not tired the next day. They are encouraged to prepare for the school day on the night before as much as possible, so they are not rushed in the mornings.

## **TYPES OF ABSENCE**

Every half-day absence from school must be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

### **Authorised Absence**

An authorised absence is where the school has either given permission in advance for the child to be absent or where an explanation offered is accepted as satisfactory justification for absence.

Absence *may* be authorised for the following non-exhaustive reasons:

- Illness, appointments. Please note: appointments should always be made outside school times where possible. When not possible, students should only be absent for the duration of the appointment and commute time to and from school.
- Unavoidable cause (which is expected to be an emergency and unavoidable).
- Days of religious observance as agreed with an appropriate religious authority.
- Traveller child travelling for the purposes of parents' employment.
- External accredited exams, such as Music examinations.

### **Unauthorised Absences**

An unauthorised absence is where either no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is not considered acceptable by the school.

This could include:

- Parents / Carers keeping children off school to assist with work or translation.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Parents' failure to follow the correct procedure for informing the school of absence.
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a late mark (see lateness section).
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Day trips and holidays in term time.

If an absence is recorded as unauthorised the school may refer this to the Local Authority's Pupil Attendance Service. The Local Authority can use various sanctions to promote regular attendance such as issuing a penalty notice fine or initiate court proceedings (Further information below).

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, it can sometimes be that they are reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers, and the child wherever possible. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

### **Persistent and Severely Absent pupils (PA and SA)**

A pupil is a 'persistent absentee' if they miss 10% or more of their schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

A pupil is "severely absent" if they miss 50% or more of their school across the school year for whatever reason.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA or SA threshold or is at risk of moving towards that level, is given priority and you will be informed of this as necessary.

PA and SA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral support system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA and SA pupils and their parents/carers are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include allocation of additional support through a Mentor, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance.

If your child has or is at risk of reaching the threshold for Persistent Absence or Severely absent you will be asked to provide evidence for any future absence. This may be medical evidence for illness which can be in the form of prescription, appointment cards, medicine packaging or hospital letter or a screen print from MY GP app. Where we have concerns about your child's health, we may ask you to talk to the school nurse or for permission to contact their GP or other medical professionals for advice.

## **STAFF ROLES FOR ATTENDANCE**

**All staff contact details can be found on the school website at:**

### **The Attendance Officer (AO)**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems affecting or likely to affect attendance. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school may consult with Camden's Pupil Attendance Service. If other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. They may also apply for an Education Supervision Order through the Family Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the Camden Pupil Attendance Service.

School will follow the procedures as shown at page 17.

**Other school staff who may deal with attendance are:**

- Your son's Form Tutor
- Your son's Head of Year
- A member of senior staff responsible for Attendance

### **The Role of Teachers**

All class teachers and Form Tutors have a responsibility in keeping an attendance register. This is a legal document and must be completed accurately. It is a legal requirement that the attendance register must be marked at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Absences are coded according to the information received from the parent of the child.

Teachers monitor the register daily and they are encouraged to be attentive and discerning to any emerging patterns of absence and lateness or any alarming changes in this area.

Teachers encourage patterns of good punctuality and good attendance by praising those children who come to school each day and arrive on time.



Teachers and support staff report any concerns about a pupil's attendance or punctuality to the School Attendance lead, Attendance Officer or Head of Year. This can sometimes then be referred to the LA if a Penalty Notice or legal action is being sought.

#### **Role of Heads of Year / other Pastoral Support Staff**

Heads of Year are responsible for the overall pastoral care of students in their year group. As such, they meet regularly with the Attendance Officer and Senior Leaders and lead the attendance strategy for students in their year group.

#### **Attendance Lead**

The Attendance Lead is at the forefront of managing school attendance and plays a crucial role in ensuring students benefit from the educational opportunities available. They are responsible for improving school attendance by reviewing attendance data to identify trends in attendance. They will work with key staff and parents and carers to and reduce levels of absence and unauthorised absence.

#### **The Headteacher's Role**

The Headteacher is responsible for authorising requests for term-time absences. The Headteacher will consider every request for leave on its individual merits. All applications for a leave of absence must be made in advance to the Headteacher and will only be considered if there are exceptional circumstances. Ultimately the Headteacher will be the final arbiter of the authorisation of any leave.

The Headteacher oversees the collection and reporting of attendance data and the publication of statistics and reports on attendance to parents, pupils, governors and to Camden Council.

#### **The role of Governors**

**The Governing Board takes a keen interest in attendance issues.** There is a School Governor with responsibility for school attendance policies and issues, including monitoring attendance. It is their role to be aware of general attendance issues and, along with the whole Governing Board, inform and oversee school attendance performance initiatives.

Reports and statistics and initiatives to improve school attendance will be shared and consulted on with the Governing Board and documented in minutes of Governors' meeting (made available to all parents) and the Governors' Annual Report.

Governors may be invited to meetings with parents as part of the school's escalation and support process.

An attendance audit is carried out at the end of each academic year in preparation for September. This is done in collaboration with the Pupil Attendance Service in order to review processes and practices within the school in relation to attendance punctuality. This is made available to the local authority and Ofsted.

## THE LAW

### Attendance and safeguarding

Section 7 of the Education act 1996 states that:

*the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full-time education suitable:*

- (a) to age, ability, and aptitude and*
- (b) to any special educational needs, he/ she may have either at school or otherwise*

### Compulsory School Age

A child is compulsory school age from the beginning of the next term after their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday until the last Friday of June in the academic year of their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

This policy is written in relation to the following acts of Parliament and guidance relating to attendance:

- Education Act 1996
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003.
- Working together to improve school attendance 2024.
- We will also take account of all new legislation and initiatives.

## LEGAL SANCTIONS AND ACTIONS

The school will make every attempt to contact the parent or carer by telephone and in writing. In the first instance we would invite them to discuss the problem unless the absence relates to leave in term time without permission. Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, attendance may be enforced where necessary through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education. A referral may be made to the LA under the following circumstances based on the national framework for penalty notices:

- A single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period, may span different terms or school years This will include unauthorised absence for lateness Code U.
- A term time holiday taken without permission would count towards the 10 sessions.
- A national limit of 2 penalty notices that can be issued to a parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period, so at the 3<sup>rd</sup> (or subsequent) offence(s) other legal prosecution will be considered.

Penalty notices are issued to each parent or carer for each of their children for example two parents with three children would receive a total of six penalty notices, one parent with two children will receive a total of two penalty notices.

From September 2024 each penalty notice is £80 if paid in the first 21 days, from days 22 to 28 the fine doubles to £160 for each penalty notice.

For the second offence issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period being charged at a higher rate of £160 for days 1 – 28, with no option for this second offence to be discharged at the lower rate of £80.

The Pupil Attendance Service has asked us to point out that it is not possible to pay these fines by instalments or lower the cost when they have increased, or to just fine one parent.

Payment can be made online and instructions on how to pay are included on the penalty notice letter. Any problems with paying online should be discussed as early as possible with the Pupil Attendance Service by ringing 020 7974 1007.

If a penalty notice is not paid or the Pupil Attendance Service feels that that the level of absence warrants court action the local authority will arrange for a court hearing. There are a range of sentencing options available to the magistrate including the maximum penalty of a fine of up to £2500 per parent for each offence as well as the possibility of up to three months in prison.

#### **What happens after a long absence?**

The school is sensitive to the needs and circumstances of pupils returning after significant periods of absence and will support the smooth reintegration of pupils both academically and socially. In such circumstances the school will work with parents, carers and pupil towards an agreed reintegration plan which may include opportunities for counselling and feedback, peer support and mentoring, along with an agreed review period.

#### **EXCEPTIONAL LEAVE IN TERM TIME**

**Working together to improve school attendance states “the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.”**

Parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid requesting leaves of absence for holidays unless it is unavoidable. There is no entitlement in law for any leave of absence from school in term time. Taking leave in term time will affect your child’s schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

Remember that any monetary savings you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child’s education.

All applications for a leave of absence must be made in advance using the form found on the school website to the Headteacher and will only be considered if there are exceptional circumstances. In deciding the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time. The Headteacher will be the final arbiter as to the authorisation of any leave.

There is no entitlement in law for any leave of absence from school in term time.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or more than that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice. Your child’s school place may also be at risk. Previous good attendance or your child’s education ability are not considered when the school make the decision. If you have siblings at other schools, you must seek permission from all the schools, and it is possible that one school may grant it, and another may not.

If exceptional leave is agreed you will receive written confirmation from the school. If you do not get a written confirmation, DO NOT assume that permission has been granted. Only the headteacher can decide if they will grant exceptional leave – **no one else in school has permission to do so** and leaving an application form is not permission to take leave.

If leave has been granted and a child returns late outside of the agreed dates either before or after, the school will reserve the right to unauthorise the entire period of leave taken.

If parents have any comments, concerns, or complaints regarding the school attendance policy these can be addressed in writing to the Headteacher or an appointment can be arranged for discussion with the Headteacher. If a parent believes the school can support or assist them in their child's school attendance, we would be happy to accommodate this.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the Pupil Attendance Service themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. They will not overrule the school's decision to refuse leave in term time. You can email [pas@camden.gov.uk](mailto:pas@camden.gov.uk)

### **Children Missing from Education**

If you move from the area and your whereabouts are unknown, the school can legally remove your child from the roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that if you keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Your child may be at risk of losing their school place if your whereabouts are not known.

It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if you are leaving the area, you provide details of where and how you can be contacted. If you do not do this and the school is unable to trace your child, this would be treated as a **safeguarding matter**.

### **Help & Support**

If you need help with attendance, it is important that you contact school about the issues as soon as possible. The quicker we know what the problem is, the quicker that we can work together to solve it and put a plan together which will meet your child's needs and ensure your child can benefit from all that school has to offer. Where needed we can also involve other services to make sure that your child and your family gets the right support, at the right time from the right people.

### **Summary**

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

**Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:**

**Head teacher:** Ms. Izzy Jones

**Governor:**

**Attendance Lead:** Ms. Sam Nunnery

**Attendance Officer:** Ms Ruby Groves [attendance@williamellis.camden.sch.uk](mailto:attendance@williamellis.camden.sch.uk)

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

**Date of Policy /Review:**

May 2024

## Condensed version for parents

### Attendance Policy Summary (Please see our full policy)

William Ellis School aims to provide a conducive environment for education

- Regular attendance is crucial for effective learning, student achievement, well-being, and development. High attendance correlates with better academic outcomes.
- Our attendance target is 95% for all pupils.

### Safeguarding and Support Services:

- Attendance is integral to safeguarding children.
- Emergency contact information must be kept up-to-date to prevent loss of school place.

### Absence Procedures:

- Absences are classified as authorised or unauthorised.
- Schools will closely monitor any pupil with below 90% or 50% attendance.
- Parents must inform the school of absences promptly.
- Unexplained absences prompt communication from the school.
- Procedures are in place to address persistent lateness.

### Exceptional Leave in Term Time:

- School term dates are published in advance on the school website
- Requests for leave during term time are discouraged.
- Unauthorised leave may result in penalties.

### Legal Sanctions

- Legal interventions including penalty notices may be pursued for unauthorised absences.

### Help & Support:

- The school collaborates with students and parents to address attendance barriers. Parents are encouraged to seek help from the school for attendance issues. We may work with other agencies to offer support to improve attendance.
- Regular updates on attendance and progress are provided to parents.

### Appendix 1: Absence and punctuality escalation table

Commented [EM1]: Do you want to move the 97% to 95%

Commented [EM2R1]: Also needs to remove Education welfare and replace with Pupil Attendance Service - cant edit this bit

